

---

# Writing for Soprano

Dory Hayley  
Sonic Boom Workshop  
October 16, 2022

---

Range and tessitura

Setting text

Extended technique



### **Normal Range**

Mostly write here!

### **Most Comfortable Range**

Text most audible here

### **Comfortable High Notes**

Good for climaxes, emotional moments

Use sparingly

Don't expect text to be understood

### **Extreme High Notes**

**\*\*ONLY use for specific purpose after consultation\*\***

### **Comfortable Low Notes**

Use sparingly

### **Extreme Low Notes**

Use very sparingly

Will be very soft



# Tessitura

- “The part of the vocal register in which most of a voice part lies”
- Average pitch
- The right tessitura gives a voice most beautiful and characteristic timbre
  - Too high feels tight
  - Too low feels heavy
- Think of tessitura as home base

Wolf  
Zum neuen Jahr  
(Mörrike)

Mässig, (nicht eilen)

Wie

*(dolcissimo)*

heim - li - cher Wei - se ein En - ge - lein lei - se mit ro - si - gen Fü - ssen die

- Never goes ultra high, but whole piece hovers at top of staff
- Makes climactic high A uncomfortable to access

Er - de be - tritt, so nah - te der Mor - gen. Jauchzt ihm, ihr From - men, ein

## Erstes Zeitmass

wen - del Herr, dir in die Hän - de sei An -

*p* *cresc.*

fang und En - de, sei Al - les, sei

*überströmend* *ritard.*

Al - les ge - legt!

*a tempo* *ff* *p* *dolce*

*dim.* *ppp* *rit.* *ppp*

# Zueignung

(Bermann v. Giln)

Richard Strauss, Op.10 No.1

Für hohe Stimme

Moderato

Gesang

Piano

Ja, du weist es

teu - re See - le, dass ich fern von dir - mich quäl - e,

Lie - be macht die Her - zen krank, ha - be Dank.

coo *espr.*

Einst hielt ich, der Frei - heit Ze - cher, hoch den A - me -

Copyright 1907 by J. & C. Schott Verlag  
 Revised Copyright 1925 by Dr. Richard Strauss

R. & E. 19011a

All rights reserved  
 Translated for the  
 Filmed in England

thy - sien - Be - cher und du seg - ne - test den Trunk, ha - be Dank.

coo *espr.*

mit Wei - ße  
 Und be - schworst da - rin die Höl - len,

his ich, was ich nie ge - we - sen, bei - lig, bei - lig aus Herz dir sank

ha - be Dank.

R. & E. 19011a

# Tessitura: Texture matters

11

No 7. Auf einer Burg.

Adagio.

Ein-ge-schla-fen auf der Lan-er o-ben ist der al-le Rit-ter, drü-ken ge-ken  
Ro-gen-schub-er und der Wald rauscht durch das Güt-ter. Ein-ge-wä-k-sen Bart und Haar-er  
und ver-stei-ert Brust und Kean-se sitzt er vie-l- hundert Jah-re o-ben in der still-len  
Klan- Drauss-ist es still und frei-lück, al-le sind in's  
Thal ge-zu-gen, Wal-des-vi-gel ein-nan-sin-gen in den loe-ren Fen-ster-ho-gen,

R. 8. 127.

- Low tessitura for soprano, but sparse texture makes it manageable

12

No 12. Frühlingsnacht.

Ziemlich rasch. Leidenschaftlich.

Ue-ber-ü Gar-ten durch die  
Lüf-te hört' ich Wan-der-vö-gel zir-zü, das he-  
den-ot Fröh-ling's-lüf-te, an-ton fangtschm-er zu  
blü-chen. Juch-zen nicht'ich, nichte wei-ner, ist mir's  
dich, als künat'-nicht sei-al. Al-le Wan-der-wie-der

ritard.  
ritard.  
Im Tempo.  
ritard.  
ritard.

R. 8. 127.

- Low tessitura plus dense, roiling texture makes this uncomfortable

## Comfortable

7 *f* 8 *rit.* 3

blühn\_ die Blu-men mir die Welt!  
world\_ is o-ver - grown with flow'rs!

Detailed description: This musical score is in 3/4 time. It features a vocal line starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4. A large leap occurs to a quarter note C5, which is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. This is followed by a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. A ritardando (*rit.*) marking is placed above the staff, followed by a quarter rest and a quarter note F#4. The phrase concludes with a quarter note E4, marked with a triplet (*3*).

*mf* 13:8 *leggero* *fp* *mp* *mf* 5 *ffp*

*n. vib.* *n. vib.* *oscil. molto*

Al\_ in fantaisi\_ naissant\_ ti ton\_

Detailed description: This musical score is in 3/4 time. It features a vocal line starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. A large leap occurs to a quarter note C5, which is marked with a fortissimo (*ffp*) dynamic. This is followed by a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The phrase concludes with a quarter note F#4, marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes various performance markings such as *mf*, *leggero*, *mp*, *mf*, and *ffp*, as well as vibrato (*n. vib.*) and oscillation (*oscil. molto*) instructions.

I love leaps!  
(especially for  
approaching the top)

Vocal texture

## Uncomfortable

*ff*

bright sun-set that blan-ket-ed\_ ev-'ry-one in one sec-ond of awe.

Detailed description: This musical score is in 4/4 time. It features a vocal line starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. A large leap occurs to a quarter note C5, which is marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. This is followed by a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The phrase concludes with a quarter note F#4, marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes a triplet (*3*) marking over the notes B4, A4, and G4.



# Anton Webern: Drei Lieder, op. 25

---





**Setting Text**



# Setting Text

- Read text aloud
- Use metric accent, pitch contour, duration to mirror natural text rhythm and accents
  - Unless you don't want to!
- Use high notes to mark climax or important/emotional parts in text
- Keep in mind
  - Voice naturally increases in volume as you ascend
  - Open vowels [a] and [o] produce better climactic high notes than [i] and [e]
  - Diction less clear above the passaggio
  - Careful of dense/busy piano textures with lots of text
  - Timbre brighter as you ascend



# Extended Vocal Techniques



## Extended Technique Ideas

- Phonemes
- Vowel slides/oscillation
- Tongue clicks
- Cheek slaps
- Lip pops
- Lip trill
- Tongue trill
- Vocal fry
- Whistling/half whistling
- Body percussion
- Extra percussion
- Experiment with timbre
- Theatricality/stage directions

# Camilo Mendez: Plegaria Muda 1

- Phonemes
- Whispering
- Humming
- Tongue clicks
- Lip pops
- Vowel oscillation
- Vocal fry
- Glissando



# Helmut Lachenmann: ...got lost...

---

- Modified whistling
- Voiced consonants
- Exhales/inhales
- Tongue trills
- Tongue clicks
- Cheek slaps



# Cathy Berberian: Stripsody

---

- Graphic notation
- Onomatopoeia
- Timbral experimentation







## Two Golden Rules of Extended Technique!

Anything goes! BUT:

1. Be careful of textures (extended techniques softer than singing)
2. DO NOT write anything on the inhale EXCEPT with prior consultation

---

# Questions?

[www.dorotheahayley.com](http://www.dorotheahayley.com)  
[doryhayley@gmail.com](mailto:doryhayley@gmail.com)